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BALDWIN-UNITED BACK FROM THE DEAD

ADNAN KHASHOGGI: CASH SHORT, DREAMING BIG

THE NEW CASE FOR PROTECTIONISM

724434

For executives' surprising views on government hiring requirements—symbolized in Roberto Bressan's cover photo—see page 26.

MANAGING

Businessmen Like to Hire by the Numbers 26
The Administration is taking shots at affirmative action. Managers would rather leave it alone. *by Anne B. Fisher*

THE ECONOMY

The New Case for Protectionism 33
For high-tech industries it might make sense—but using it effectively may be impossible. *by Sylvia Nasar*

Fortune Forecast:
• The Economic Blahs Won't Go Away Soon 42
• Thorns of Plenty 43

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE

Baldwin-United Back from the Dead 46
The crashed conglomerate proposes to emerge from bankruptcy as a trading stamp company. *by Steven Flax*

Riches to Rags at Delta Drilling 57
The company's plan to make employees wealthy could make many beneficiaries poor. *by Maggie McComas*

Companies to Watch 62

SELLING

Different Folks, Different Strokes 65
Mass marketers are learning that where people live reveals a lot about what they want to buy. *by Thomas Moore*

London's Unseemly Squabble Over *Dallas* 73

Pearle Goes Tooth and Eye in Retailing 77

Software Cost Cuts 77

TECHNOLOGY

The Mighty Molecules of Microspheres 105

How PCs Shook an Industry 105

MONEY & MARKETS

Adnan Khashoggi's Soaring U.S. Dreams 108
The Saudi dealmaker wants to be a U.S. business giant. A cash squeeze is crimping his plans. *by Ford S. Worthy*

The Flap Over Super-Shares 114
New classes of stock with enhanced voting power aren't the death knell of corporate democracy. *by Gary Hector*

POLITICS & POLICY

Castro Tightens Cuba's Belt 120
A creaky Marxist economy dependent on sugar and Soviet aid needs more than Fidel's tinkering. *by Jeremy Main*

The Administration's Tough Talk on Trade 135

Cheers for Tax Reform 135

Golden Futures After Public Service 136

PROFILE

The Man Who Would Be Volcker 146
Outspoken Preston Martin is No. 2 at the Fed and still a top contender to succeed the chairman. *by Gary Hector*

People to Watch 150

The Editor's Desk 4

News/Trends 8
AT&T cuts jobs, Carbide leaks again, and more.

Follow-Up 11
Commodore after Tramiel, Holmes à Court vs. the rules, and more.

Letters to Fortune 15

Keeping Up 153
by Daniel Seligman

Personal Investing 159
Computer stocks. Community Psychiatric Centers. Brokerage stocks. Portfolio Talk: Fund manager Charles Johnson.
by Michael McFadden

Other Voices 171
Inflation's winners want it back.
by John H. Makin

On the Road 179
Stalking the light business meal.
by John Nielsen

Books & Ideas 193
A new kind of Naderism.
by Michael Kinsley

Index 202

Office Hours 205
Managing expense accounts.
by Walter Kiechel III

GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS, AND AN "INVISIBLE CEILING"

■ How are blacks faring? That depends on what statistics you look at. On the bad-news side, the median black American family has only about 55% as much income as the median white family (disregarding income in kind, such as food stamps). On the good-news side, the average black family headed by a husband under the age of 35 has about the same income as a comparable white family.

A mixture of good and bad news is discernible in the tables at the bottom of this page, showing figures compiled by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The first impression you get is that white women are faring better than blacks. In 1984 black women and black men lagged behind white women in both employment categories, even allowing for the fact that in the total work force white women outnumber either black men or black women about 7 to 1.

Affirmative action *is needed to give blacks a fair chance, argues accountant Ramona Henderson: "The free-market system just doesn't work."*

But if you look at rate of change over time, crosscurrents are visible. From their low base in 1976, black women have progressed *faster* than white women. In the officials and managers category, black women gained relative to white women from 1976 to 1980 and again from 1980 to 1984. In the professions the trend is less distinct. Black women gained relative to white women from 1976 to 1980, but slipped somewhat in relative position from 1980 to 1984. Even so, there was some relative improvement in the position of black women over the eight-year period. In 1976 white women outnumbered black women 16 to 1 in the professions; in 1984 the ratio was 14 to 1.

For black men, though, the figures tell a different and disturbing story. From 1976 to 1980 and again from 1980 to 1984, black men lost ground relative to both white women and black women, in both categories of employment.

In some professions good news about blacks is hard to find. Accounting is a case in point. The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants reports that 96 major firms with thousands of partners have a total of 23 black partners. Over the past several years, according to the institute, the number of blacks hired by the major U.S. accounting firms has fallen sharply. "Accounting firms and corporations no longer recruit at small colleges in the South, where many black students are," says Ramona Henderson, president of the National Association of Black Accountants. She thinks the answer is stronger affirmative action pressure from Washington. "The free-market system," she says, "just doesn't work."

In big-time law, blacks seem to be slipping backward. An article in the March 1984 issue of the *American Lawyer* entitled "Why Blacks Still Haven't Made It" points out that 25 large law firms in New York City had a total of 2,000 associates in 1979, of whom 64, or 3.2%, were black. Five years later the same firms had ballooned to 4,000 associates, and only 94, or 2.3%, were black. That drop came during a period when the number of blacks enrolled in the top law schools was growing.

Among black executives and professionals, there is talk of an "invisible ceiling" that blacks bump up against. "The hardest thing for a black middle manager is that there are no role models higher up the ladder," says Leroy Nunery, an assistant vice president at First National Bank of Chicago and a vice president of the National Black MBA Association. As a result, Nunery says, black MBAs are more likely to change jobs than whites are. When they hit the invisible ceiling, they move elsewhere in search of a higher ceiling.

A recent study by Edward Irons, a banking and finance professor at Atlanta University, found that eight out of ten black managers in banks and other financial institutions in the U.S. believe that their chances of promotion are not as good as those of their white peers. Consequently, most black bankers would not hesitate to leave their current employers if something better came along. The job hopping may be bad for their careers. Elaine Carter, a New York management consultant who specializes in affirmative action, believes that job hopping is part of a vicious circle that works against black progress. "Despair hurts productivity," she says. "Good people give up or leave—making the company more cautious about promoting others in the future, and so those people leave, and so it goes."

With the Reagan Administration backing away from affirmative action, Carter believes, the problem of discouragement among black managers is getting worse. "Many blacks in business feel that doors they have only recently pried open could now be slammed shut again," she says. "Without a strong steering hand from government, there is a sense that things could easily slip back to the way they were before affirmative action came along."

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	PERCENT OF TOTAL		
	1976	1980	1984
OFFICIALS AND MANAGERS			
White women	13.4%	16.5%	20.4%
Black women	.9%	1.2%	1.7%
Black men	2.3%	2.7%	2.7%

OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY	PERCENT OF TOTAL		
	1976	1980	1984
PROFESSIONALS			
White women	27.5%	32.6%	36.9%
Black women	1.7%	2.4%	2.6%
Black men	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%